



LIVE

TRUMP SUPPORTERS IN ARMED STANDOFF WITH POLICE INSIDE US CAPITOL - REPORTS

[Home](#) / [Op-ed](#) /

Sensitive tests mean that many who test positive for Covid barely carry any virus, making it hard to grasp true reach of disease

3 Sep, 2020 18:34 / Updated 3 months ago



FILE PHOTO: Clinicians from 360 Clinic are administering the test kits, but citizens will do their own sample taking © Getty Images / Carolyn Cole / Los Angeles Times

7482

3

Follow RT on

Google News

By **Peter Andrews**, Irish science journalist and writer based in London. He has a background in the life sciences, and graduated from the University of Glasgow with a degree in genetics

It has been revealed that standard tests being used in parts of US to diagnose Covid-19 cases are extremely sensitive, with no guarantee that the vast majority of those marked down as "positive" can spread the disease.

Editor's note: This article and headline have been amended by the author, as the initial version contained statements that may have been liable to misinterpretation or lacked full context. [RT.com](#) supports Covid-19 testing and other widely-adopted public health measures developed to fight the pandemic.

Top US virologists have been stunned by [revelations](#) about the laxity of the US Covid testing regimen. It turns out that tests that deliver a simple binary “positive or negative” result are not fit for purpose, as they tell us nothing about the contagiousness of each person.

Data from three US states – New York, Nevada and Massachusetts – shows that when the amount of the virus found in a person is taken into account, up to 90 percent of people who have tested positive could actually have been negative, as they may be carrying only tiny amounts of the virus. If so, these people would likely not be contagious, pose a risk to others, or have any need to isolate – at least at the time of the test.

This raises the distinct possibility that pre-symptomatic, post-symptomatic and asymptomatic cases, could be caught in the net, and without further study it is hard to tell what percentage these constitute of the total.

ALSO ON RT.COM

White House rejects ‘corrupt’ WHO concerns over Covid-19 vaccine development

It’s a sensitive issue

So how could this have happened? The answer has to do with the sensitivity of PCR (Polymerase chain reaction) tests for Covid, which it turns out can be ramped up according to the taste of the testing companies. Most testing companies have chosen the outrageously high sensitivity limit of 40 PCR cycles – meaning that the DNA in a sample is exponentially increased 40 times in order to amplify its signal.

But using such a ridiculously sensitive test means that the faintest traces of a dead virus, or even leftovers from previous infections, can result in a **READ MORE** positive. Professor Juliet Morrison, a University of California virologist, said that even a limit of 35 PCR cycles is too high, let alone 40. She said she was *“shocked that people would think that 40 could represent a positive.”* But apparently, pretty much everyone in the US Covid brain trust took exactly that on faith.

If a significant percentage of tests doesn’t tell us anything about the patient’s true Covid status, the real scale of the pandemic becomes impossible to estimate. For a seasoned **Just wait for a vaccine? First confirmed REINFECTION means there may be no way to eradicate Covid** **ignorer** of statistics that contain Covid ‘cases’, there are no surprises here. The truth is, there was never any reason to treat them as written in stone. The FDA, for instance, has only now been forced to concede that they have no idea how different testing companies determine which the positive and negative tests are: they just accept whatever data they are given.

But it should not have taken some journalist to ask the right question to discover this: a bit of common sense would have been enough. What is it going to take for

these professional virologists to drop their assumptions and models, and just start acting based on the facts at hand?

ALSO ON RT.COM

We might have to wait forever for science to show the Covid threat is over, so let's use our common sense & get back to normal

Not fit for purpose?

It would be difficult to argue that the US Covid testing is fit for purpose in its current state. The experts seem to base every decision now on case numbers or derivatives thereof, despite the apparent lack of association between fluctuating case numbers and hospital admissions and deaths; the latter two of which have been relatively negligible for months – even when taking into account recent rises in parts of the world - compared to the springtime peaks. But they keep ringing that bell: ever more testing, they toot, will somehow lead us into their 'new normal'.

It's a virus so deadly, you need a test to tell whether you have it or not. So goes the refrain of many [lockdown skeptics](#), Covidiot and anti-maskers, of whom I am an indignant supporter. Something has gone... not just wrong, but totally haywire... when the might of the world's scientific establishment is trained with the zeal of a

Witchfinder General on one particular microscopic particle. Not even one that's most likely to kill you; the [latest data](#) show it is the eighth most common cause of death in England, and it doesn't make the top ten in Wales.

Meanwhile, in Wuhan, the original source of this disease, the [pool parties](#) are in full swing. They don't seem to be too worried about PCR tests or contact tracing, or even the virus itself. The Chinese government says that their supreme lockdown was so awesome that they now have zero Covid: probably a biological impossibility. Maybe they just stopped testing, and decided to get on with their lives. A turn of events we are unlikely to see if the US or Europe any time soon, for better or worse.

Think your friends would be interested? Share this story!

The statements, views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of RT.

OPED

7482

3

Trends: [Covid-19 coronavirus news](#)



FOLLOW RT ON INSTAGRAM

Lockdown supporters are using psychology pseudoscience to label anti-maskers as irrational, stupid sociopaths

West rushes to accuse Moscow of 'Novichok-type' poisoning of Navalny... but would Russia really have reason to get rid of him?

Subscribe to RT newsletter to get stories the mainstream media won't tell you

E-mail

Subscribe

FROM OUR PARTNERS

U.K. teachers' union urges schools to close

Hundreds Sent to Emergency Room After Getting COVID-19 Vaccines

Texas hospital offers workers \$500 bonus to get COVID-19 vaccine

Podcasts

[All podcasts](#)

Boom Bust: Saudi Arabia & Russia clash over oil output



RT

Boom Bust: Saudi A...

SOUND CLOUD



Did Pres. Trump "Pressure" GA Official "Find" Votes? Pelosi Speaker Again?



RT

Did Pres. Trump "Pr...

SOUND CLOUD





PROTECT YOUR BRAIN!

**RT IS TWISTING MINDS ACROSS
THE COUNTRY**





'Unacceptable' interference: International Criminal Court objects to US sanctions prompted by war crimes investigation

NYT columnist goes for a jog, sees no mayhem and declares that New York's alleged surge in crime is a 'nonexistent crisis'

'It was a set-up!' Nancy Pelosi claims salon tricked her into flouting coronavirus restrictions to get hair done, demands APOLOGY

'Is that a threat?' Gov. Cuomo says Trump 'better have an army' to protect him if he comes to New York

'Burn this motherf**ker down!' WATCH protesters descend on DC police station after officers fatally shoot 18yo suspect

Democratic St. Louis mayor forced to move away from home over BLM protests happening on doorstep

Video surfaces of 18yo shot dead in DC brandishing handgun moments before his death

The Moon is mysteriously rusting despite lack of air & liquid water

US pop star Akon's \$6bn plan to build a real-life Wakanda in Senegal is an insult to black people's intelligence

Extensive Russian research project suggests you CANNOT get Covid-19 twice unless you have a serious underlying medical condition

What's the difference? Video shows college kids LOVING parts of Trump's agenda, if told it's Biden's

'Corona World' game backed by German public TV dehumanizes lockdown resisters & kids – but sure, what could go wrong?

Y'all show some respeck now! America gives up on teaching 'standard English' in favour of 'Black language' instead

Omsk doctor who treated Navalny says if opposition figure was poisoned with Novichok, those around him must also be affected

Facebook to BAN new pre-election political ads & label early victory claims in order to 'limit potential for civil unrest'

Lebanese army discovers ANOTHER stash of ammonium nitrate at Beirut port, a month after deadly explosion

It's crazy for UK ministers to deny Tony Abbott's homophobia and misogyny if they want him to take on key trade role

Gary Lineker’s decision to live with a migrant is just another virtue-signalling ploy to allow him to lecture everyone else

A new book says looting’s fine as it’s fun and people get free stuff. It costs \$27.57, but perhaps you can steal it instead

العربيةESPPYCDEFR

--	--	--	--

RT News App

News	Op-ed	Live	Terms of Use
USA	Shows	Applications	Privacy policy
UK	Projects	Where to watch	About us
Russia	RT Play	Schedule	Contact info
Business	Podcasts	Sponsored content	Feedback & Complaints
Sport		On-Air Talent	Vacancies



© Autonomous Nonprofit Organization “TV-Novosti”, 2005–2021. All rights reserved.

Add to home screen